

CAUGHT IN A HOLE.

On a night in February, as I sat late at my desk, there came a knock at my door. I called upon me a wanderer from the Stangways jail at Manchester, telling me that the man who was convicted of stealing my money would be liberated the following day, and if I cared to make it worth his while he would have a watch set upon the prisoner with a view to recovering the treasure should he, as was suspected, have it still concealed.

I accepted his proposal, and soon after midnight was on my way back to Manchester with the prisoner. He told me that he did not propose himself to do the watching, but that it would be done by a man who had at one time been a wanderer of the jail, but had left the place some years ago.

From this man I learned that the ticket of leave man had taken up his place of abode in a northern suburb of the city, and arrangements had been made by which he (the ex-warden) would be informed of all his movements.

The thief had been convicted under the name of James Gale, and it was not until a year later that I discovered "Jim Gale" to be one of the aliases of the notorious housebreaker and burglar Charles Pease.

On the second day after my arrival in Manchester we learned that the ticket of leave man had made arrangements with a carter to accompany him out to some open fields lying on the confines of a northern suburb of the city.

About 8 o'clock in the evening the thief joined the carter whom he had engaged, bringing with him a pickaxe and shovel. He had changed his dress and appeared an ordinary laborer.

When we reached the fields in the suburbs, it was close upon 9 o'clock and pitch dark. The thief had, however, provided himself with a lantern, and by its light we saw him busily engaged digging at a spot 30 yards from the roadside.

The carter whom he had brought with him had remained with his horse and cart in the roadway, so that we could not approach very near for fear of being observed. Consequently we turned back along the road, and then striking across the field at right angles were able to approach the scene of operations from the farther side.

By this means we were able to get within a few feet of the thief without being observed. He was busily engaged and already had sunk a pit of some feet in depth. He had placed his lantern in the hole and was himself standing in it and throwing out the soil in large shovelfuls. The hole we then saw was at the foot of a large heap of stones which had evidently been used as a landing place for the spot.

Making a circuit to the right, we got to the back of the heap of stones, and approaching were able to get close up to the thief without being observed and to look down upon him at his work.

He was so busy that he would not have noticed us had we been even less cautious than we were. The hole was now sunk to a depth of six feet, and the thief had to exert himself considerably to throw out the earth.

At last, with a grunt of satisfaction, he stopped in his work and stooped down. His shovel had struck the lid of a large canvas box. Another minute and he had the lid opened, and we saw before us a collection of old silver tankards and saucers and spoons, and among the silver a small box or casket. This he also opened, and in it we saw, still bright and glittering, a mass of jewelry.

There were rings and chains and bracelets, but what struck us more than all else was a magnificent diamond tiara, containing stones of marvellous size and brilliance.

And beneath the diamonds was a packet of papers, which, with a great gasp of satisfaction, I recognized as the bank notes which this man had stolen upon nearly seven years ago.

Having satisfied himself that the stolen booty was still there, the thief closed the box and lifted it up to the surface of the hole. He placed it on the edge at the foot of the heap of stones behind which we were concealed and over the top of which we were observing him.

I had drawn the revolver with which I had provided myself and was quite prepared for the moment when he should see us.

This he did not do until he had placed the box on the ground and was preparing to climb out of the hole after it.

The man was no coward—few of the sounders who resort to burglary are—though he started when he found himself face to face with a long revolver he did not quail. Anger rather than fear was the emotion which expressed itself upon his features.

"Curse you!" he said. "What has it got to do with you?"

"Nothing, only that you've got my bank notes in that box, and that the rest of it I have got to be handed over to the police."

The thief still retained the same position, with one knee raised to the bank of earth and his other foot still resting at the bottom of the hole.

One of his hands, however, had stolen into his coat pocket, and though I had noticed this, my companion had done so and exclaimed:

"Now, No. 189, drop that, or you're a dead man," at the same time covering him with his revolver.

"And if I do, what then? How much do you want? I'll give you half of it, and I'll keep the rest."

"We shall hand you over to the police with the sword."

No sooner had the words left my lips than the thief, grown desperate at the prospect of again returning to prison to work out the remainder of his sentence, drew from his pocket the revolver upon which his fingers had been resting during the last few moments and fired point blank at me.

The bullet grazed my shoulder and passed harmlessly away; not so, however, the shot with which my companion had replied to it.

He had been prepared for a demonstration of this kind, and scarcely had the third shot been received in reply a slug which struck the hand in which his revolver was held, shattering the stock of the weapon and two of the fingers which held it.

With a cry of pain the thief disappeared within the hole, and calling to me to follow him the wanderer jumped in after him and had him handcuffed before he could make any further attempt at violence.

I had assured myself on the way to the police station that the papers in the box were indeed, as I had anticipated, my own missing bank notes, and thankful indeed was I so strangely to recover possession of my long lost money.—Exchange.

Holding a Note.
"That tenor of ours has a marvelous voice. He can hold one of his notes for half a minute."
"Faugh! I've held one of his notes for two years."—London Fun.

NO DOUBT.
He—Did you know that Prince Albert of Belgium proposes to travel through this country inognito?
She—Indeed? Perhaps we can recognize him by his coat.

OUT OF THE GINGER JAR.
(Chicago Record.)
NATURE'S RIVAL.
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HE NEVER LIED.

A good natured but rich old virtuoso called upon me one morning and introduced himself. I asked him if I could do anything for him, and he said he hoped so, but I could perhaps tell better after he made his proposition. He wanted me to find for him a man who had never lied.

"I presume," said I, "you insist upon an 'out and out'—that is, one who never told even the slightest fib, either in joke or in an innocent, philosophical manner."

"Yes, sir," he replied. "I want the genuine article. You shall have a reasonable time, and your remuneration shall be commensurate with the importance of the undertaking."

After a few more remarks between us my customer withdrew. I had bound myself to find a man who had never told a lie. At last, after spending time, money and health without the remotest symptom of success, I began to feel strong suicidal tendencies. The thought of failure was a terrible one to bear, and my blood ran cold and my heart sank within me as I pictured myself cast forever and irrevocably down from the high position which I now held in the eyes of the world as the result of my former successes. I really felt that there was but one way for me to realize the expectations of my customer, and that was to get married and raise and educate a man "to order."

But this scheme bristled with so many difficulties—not the least of which was that of finding—that I was constrained to abandon the idea. Drowning man as I was, I let that straw go by. Return I must, easily handled and mortified, but as there were many miles between us I eagerly embraced the faint, the very faint, hope that I might win from fate upon the high position which I now held in the eyes of the world as the result of my former successes. I really felt that there was but one way for me to realize the expectations of my customer, and that was to get married and raise and educate a man "to order."

But somebody has said that "it is always darkest just before day." I have the best reason for subscribing to the perfect correctness of that statement.

With that indescribable feeling, then, of triumphant joy did I send off the following telegraphic dispatch to my friend, the virtuoso:

"Complete fruition has crowned my work. I have this day found the object of my search. No doubt of its genuineness. What shall I do with him?"

In a short time a response was returned, in which, after being congratulated, I was directed to bring my man to him, ensuring neither money nor influence for that purpose.

I consulted with the gentleman in question and obtained his assent to the proposition. He was perfectly willing to go with me, and, evincing as much interest in this novel business as either my customer or myself.

I found him comfortable apartments at one of our best hotels, and sent for my employer. He came without the least delay.

And so, my dear fellow, you have found him!"

"I have," I replied. "But it was after a most arduous search." (I didn't confess how desperate I had become, and how, more by accident than by design, I came across the man we wanted.) "I was determined to succeed, and have done so. I could have brought you a great many men with records from fair to middling, but I know you wanted the pure and undiluted, and such I was bound to furnish you. This man has never told a lie, and I give you the warranty founded upon the strictest examination of himself and his antecedents. I have the sworn testimony of all his family and the principle people of the town in which he has lived all his life. But I will not detain you from interviewing your prize."

And after telling him where to find him my delighted customer withdrew, while I sought that rest which my long worked and overtaxed system required. I slept that night as one covered with laurels.

I had a very early caller next morning in my anxious customer. He quietly took a seat beside me, wearing upon his face the most curiously solemn expression I ever saw on a human physiognomy. He placed his hand upon my knee and looked into my face. Pausing a moment, he said:

"What is the matter with that man?"

"Nothing, I hope," said I, "to his discredit. He hasn't been lying to you, has he?"

"I think not," said my visitor, and the frozen face melted a little. "Why, sir, the fellow's as dumb as an oyster!"

"That's correct," said I. "And he has been over since he was born. Here," I continued, suiting the action to the word, "is the joint affidavit of his father and mother to that effect. He has never spoken a word in his life. Ergo he has never told a lie."

I had carefully left the back door open for retreat in case of necessity. But my customer, instead of showing any signs of hostility, accepted the situation in a prompt and proper manner. He acknowledged that I had done as directed, in furnishing him with a man guileless of ever uttering a falsehood. But he did not feel that he was at liberty to impose upon the kindness of the subject by keeping him from his family. He was accordingly sent home, accompanied by our thanks, and with a handsome purse from my customer. As for myself, I had no particular reason to complain in any respect, and so general satisfaction marked the conclusion of the whole affair.—Exchange.


A People Who Cannot Make Fire.
The Papuans of the Malay coast of New Guinea are still in the most primitive state. They are wholly unacquainted with metals and make their weapons of stone, bones and wood. They do not know how to start a fire, though fire is used among them. When a Russian asked them how they made a fire, they regarded it as very amusing and answered that when a person's fire went out he got some of a neighbor, and if all the fires in the village should go out they would get it from the next village. Their fathers and grandfathers had told them that they remembered a time or had heard from their ancestors that there was a time when fire was not known and everything was eaten raw. The natives of the southern coast of New Guinea, having no iron, shave themselves with a piece of glass. Formerly they shaved with flint, which they could sharpen quite well and used with considerable dexterity.—Exchange.

In His Line.
"Chumley, the inventor, promises some novel effects at his approaching wedding ceremony."
"Patent rites, I suppose."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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